

Special Notice for Canadian Nurses

Jointly Prepared by
The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)
and
The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN)
January 2005

The final rule implementing Section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 became effective on September 23, 2003. This rule requires that Canadian nurses entering the United States to work under Trade NAFTA or applying for a temporary or permanent occupational visa must obtain a *VisaScreen*™ Certificate. To date, CGFNS is the only recognized entity to provide such services by the U.S. federal government. The final rule allowed for a transition period during which the Canadian nurse must obtain the VisaScreen. That transition period ended on July 25, 2004. However, the Department of Homeland Security has provided an extension of that deadline for health professionals working under Trade NAFTA who were employed and licensed in the U.S. prior to September 23, 2003. The new deadline for healthcare professionals who qualify is July 26, 2005.

Here are the VisaScreen™ requirements applicable to foreign nurse:

- If licensed by examination in a U.S. state or territory then general nursing school transcripts and valid and unencumbered foreign and U.S. licenses must be submitted by the foreign institution to CGFNS. Passing scores in oral and written English exams (such as ETS or IELTS) must also be submitted, unless the general nursing education was obtained in a professional school located in Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, Trinidad, Tobago (in limited circumstances), the United Kingdom, or the United States.
- If licensed by endorsement in a U.S. state or territory without passage of the **NCLEX®** examination, then the temporary foreign nurse must also (in addition to the above requirements) pass either the NCLEX or the CGFNS Qualifying Exam.

Canadian nurses interested in applying for the CGFNS Qualifying Examination may do so on-line at www.cgfns.org.

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) will grant qualified candidates eligibility to take the NCLEX examination to help satisfy the VisaScreen requirements, through September 30, 2005. If currently licensed by a state or territorial board of nursing, candidates may choose to apply to either NCSBN at <http://www.ncsbn.org/testing/nclexforvisascreen.asp> or to one of the following boards of nursing: Arkansas, Connecticut, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, North Carolina, New Hampshire, and the Virgin Islands. For more information on registering with a state board of nursing to take the NCLEX examination, contact any of the above states through the link: http://www.ncsbn.org/regulation/boardsofnursing_boards_of_nursing_board.asp It should be noted that this is for immigration purposes only, and applicants seeking a state or territorial license should contact the board of nursing in the state they intend to work in for the specifics of what they need to obtain a state or territorial license.

A VisaScreen™ Certificate is issued after a complete evaluation of the nurse's credentials to verify that he or she meets the minimum federal requirements. The International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP), a division of CGFNS, administers this screening process. The VisaScreen™ program consists of the following parts:

- A credentials review of the nurse's entire professional education. Federal law requires that educational documents be sent to CGFNS directly from the nursing school.

- A validation of all registration/licensure that the nurse held and currently holds. Federal law requires that license verification be sent to CGFNS directly from the licensing agency.
- Successful completion of either the CGFNS Qualifying Exam or the NCLEX-RN.
- Successful completion of a group of English language proficiency examinations. Nurses educated in Canada (except Quebec) are exempt from the English language proficiency examinations if their instruction and textbooks were in English. If the nurse is not exempt from the English language proficiency examinations she or he will need to successfully pass one of the following English exams: TOEFL plus TWE and TSE, or TOEIC plus TWE and TSE, or the Academic module of the IELTS. Contact the following organizations for further information on the English proficiency examinations:

<u>TOEFL, TWE and TSE</u>	<u>TOEIC</u>	<u>IELTS</u>
Educational Testing Service (ETS) PO Box 6151 Princeton, NJ 08541-6151 Tel: (609) 771-7100 Website: www.ets.org	Educational Testing Service Rosedale Road, MS 10-P Princeton, NJ 08541 Tel: (609) 734-1540 Fax: (609) 734-1560 Email: toeic@ets.org Website: www.toeic.com	IELTS, International 100 East Corson Street Suite 200 Pasadena, CA 91103 Tel: (626) 564-2954 Email: ietls@ceii.org Website: www.ielts.org

NOTE: All English language proficiency scores are valid for up to two years from the date of administration.

Licensed Practical or Vocational nurses should take the NCLEX-PN (www.ncsbn.org) and contact the U.S. federal government about visa screening requirements.